

Reflections for 11th October 2020

18th Sunday after Trinity

God's Party

Jesus was often in trouble, and one of the things that got him into trouble was that he loved parties, and he loved to meet all different kinds of people. There are lots of stories in the gospels about things that happened at meals and parties that Jesus went to, and the things that he said and did there – and there are banquets and parties in some of the parables that Jesus told.

And this is a theme that runs through other parts of the Bible as well. In the Old Testament reading from the prophet Isaiah, in verse 6 we hear part of a vision of God's promises – for *all* people, not just the people of Israel. It is a vision of a holy mountain, a special place where God is present with his people, to bring comfort and peace and healing. And to throw an amazing party, with the very best food and wine, for all people to gather and share together.

The gospel reading from Luke is similar to another passage from Matthew chapter 14, that tells us about a conversation that Jesus had at a party, about the kinds of people who should be invited and included, and made welcome. And that prompted Jesus to tell the parable about a man who prepared a 'great banquet', but none of the guests turned up! They all had other things that they needed to do first, so the host decided that their places should be given to others, and especially the poor, the sick and the blind – those who often got left out.

We are all offered a place at God's banquet – God's party. God's loving welcome is a gift freely offered to us, and to every person. But, if we want to take our place at the table, we have to be ready to welcome everybody else who is invited as well – and remember God's special concern for those who often get ignored and left out.

The gospel tells us that the time to respond is now – with hearts open to our generous God, and to everyone who is invited to God's party.

Revd John Waller

Father God,
as you invite us to share the generous hospitality of your table,
so may we be ready to give as we receive,
and share your generous love with others,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Isaiah 25: 1-9; Philippians 4: 1-9; Matthew 22. 1-14

Story: The Big Party (from the gospel reading and Luke 14)